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**11 DEFENDANTS INDICTED IN IDENTITY THEFT RING FOR STEALING
INFORMATION FROM PATIENTS' RECORDS AND LOOTING BANK ACCOUNTS**

CHICAGO – Eleven defendants were indicted on federal charges for allegedly conspiring to steal the identities of more than 100 patients at two medical practice groups and then using that information to steal at least \$150,000 from the victims' bank accounts between 2000 and 2003, law enforcement officials announced today. The defendants were charged in a 35-count indictment that was returned by a federal grand jury late yesterday and made public today, announced Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois.

One defendant, **Tiana Hill**, age 36 of Chicago, worked as an administrative employee in the billing department of the University of Chicago Physicians' Group (UCPG), while another defendant, **Bonnie Williams**, age 59 of Chicago, was a receptionist at Lincoln Park Family Physicians in Chicago. Both women allegedly used their positions to access patient records and obtain the patients' personal identifying and bank account information, including names, dates of birth, social security numbers, addresses and phone numbers. Without the patients' permission, Hill and Williams sold the patients' information to defendant **Geraldine Cooper**, age 63 of Chicago, and defendant **Lamont Martin**, age 55 of Chicago, the indictment alleges.

According to the indictment, after Cooper and Martin obtained the stolen personal identifying and bank account information – regarding more than 100 patients from Hill and dozens more from Williams – Cooper would call the patients' banks to see if the accounts contained sufficient funds. If there was sufficient money in the account, Cooper and/or Martin would call

upon other co-defendants to go to the banks and pose as the legitimate account holder, or in numerous instances Cooper posed as the account holder. Cooper and Martin provided the other defendants with the legitimate account holder's personal information and signature so they could memorize the information and practice their hand-writing before going to the patients' banks, the indictment alleges.

As part of the conspiracy, Cooper and/or Martin took pictures of other defendants to create fake identification documents in the name of the legitimate account holder but bearing the photograph of the defendant who was posing as the legitimate account holder. The indictment alleges that defendant **Anthony Vaughn**, age 39 of Chicago, manufactured false identification documents and sold them to Martin, who also obtained stolen checks from other sources. Martin then provided stolen checks to Cooper, who made them payable to the legitimate account holder, it adds.

Cooper, Martin and/or other defendants then went to various branches of the legitimate account holders' banks with fake identification and the stolen checks and deposited the stolen checks into the legitimate account holders' accounts. At the same time, the defendants would withdraw money against the deposited checks and obtain cash, which they divided among themselves, according to the indictment.

Defendants who allegedly posed as legitimate account holders are: **Kimberly Rucker**, age 42 of Chicago, **Ricquia Abrams**, age 58 of Chicago, **Pamela Fox**, age 50 of Chicago, **James Smith**, age 69 of Chicago, **John Lewis**, age 44 of Chicago, and **Chontella Cooks**, age 46 of Chicago.

All 11 defendants were charged with one count of conspiracy to commit identity theft. In addition, each defendant except Smith was charged with one or more counts of identification document fraud and bank fraud. Vaughn also was charged with three counts of manufacturing false identification documents and one count of unlawful possession of equipment used to make false identification documents. Cooper is in federal custody stemming from a criminal complaint filed

previously in the case, while Martin and Hill were released on bond after being charged previously. Vaughn is also in custody. The other defendants, who were charged for the first time in the indictment, will be ordered to appear for arraignment in U.S. District Court at date to be determined.

Mr. Fitzgerald announced the charges with Kenneth T. Laag, Inspector-in-Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in Chicago; David W. Fisher, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the Secret Service in Chicago; and Superintendent Philip J. Cline of the Chicago Police Department. The Chicago Police Department Financial Crimes Unit, in conjunction with numerous local police departments, assisted the federal agencies in the investigation.

In announcing the indictment, Mr. Fitzgerald stated: “Unfortunately, identity theft and the resulting financial crimes have become an increasing problem in our everyday lives. It is particularly offensive that these defendants stole the victims’ identities from local hospitals and doctors’ offices. People have enough to worry about when they go to a doctor. They shouldn’t have to worry about losing their identity to recover their health. As this indictment shows, the U.S. Attorney’s Office and our state and federal law enforcement partners remain committed to investigating and prosecuting those who prey on innocent victims.” Law enforcement officials have worked with the University of Chicago Physicians’ Group and the Lincoln Park Family Physicians in an effort to notify the victims that their identities were compromised.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick Pope.

If convicted, conspiracy to commit identity theft and each count of identification document fraud and manufacturing false identification documents carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. The Court, however, would determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed.

The public is reminded that a indictment and informations contain only charges and are not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the United States has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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